

The Diveheart Foundation (Diveheart.org) is a non-profit national organization established to provide and support educational SCUBA diving and snorkeling experience programs that are open to any child, adult, or veteran with a disability with the hope of providing both physical and psychological therapeutic value to that person. Diveheart is opening a Northeast Chapter in NJ and was looking for volunteers to work with Wounded Warriors and other disabled individuals.

In August, Bill Smith, from the Picatinny Dive Club and several members of the Pristine Azul Dive Club began training to be certified as a Dive Buddies or Instructors under the requirements of the Handicapped SCUBA Association. The group conducted a Discover SCUBA event on 27 August at the Caldwell Community Center which was a great success. Interrupted by Hurricane Irene, participants finished the certification program on 16 October at Dutch Springs, PA. Additional contact has been made with the VA in Lyons, NJ and the USMA at Westpoint to gain additional support for the Wounded Warrior aspects of the program.

The certification program is intense with equipment set-up, transfer, weighting, buoyancy, mask clearing and removal, ear clearing, communication, emergency and rescue skills trained. Specific skills are taught for blind, paraplegic and quadriplegic divers. Empathy training and basic medical knowledge is included in the certification program.